

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115
Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

February 1, 2016

The Honorable Nicole Lurie, M.D., M.P.H.
Assistant Secretary for
Preparedness and Response
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Lurie,

Pursuant to Rules X and XI of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Committee on Energy and Commerce is examining U.S. public health preparedness and response to the Zika virus.

The Zika virus is an emerging public health threat linked to a rise in babies born with microcephaly, a very serious condition characterized by a small head and brain. Over the last year, there has been a surge of Zika cases in South America, where it has so far infected more than 1 million Brazilians, been tentatively linked to about 4,000 cases of microcephaly, and resulted in 46 of these babies having died. In addition to microcephaly, health officials in Latin American countries are investigating whether Zika is the cause in an increased number of cases of Guillain-Barre Syndrome, a rare and sometimes life-threatening condition that attacks the immune system. The Zika virus is transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which is also a vector for dengue fever and chikungunya, and can be found in the U.S.

With Zika now circulating in 24 countries and territories in the Caribbean and Central and South America, there is increased concern that the virus could reach the U.S. According to a new study in the journal The Lancet, the Zika virus has the potential to spread across warmer and wetter parts of the Western hemisphere as mosquitoes pick up the virus from infected travelers and then spread the virus to other people. Infectious disease models estimate as many as 200 million people in the U.S. live in areas that might be conducive to the spread of Zika during summer months.

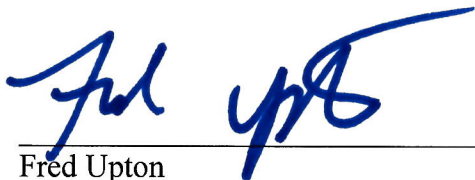
The committee seeks further information regarding the U.S. public health response to the emerging threat of the Zika virus. We respectfully request a briefing as soon as possible from

appropriate ASPR staff with committee staff. To assist the committee's inquiry, we would like the briefing to cover the following questions:

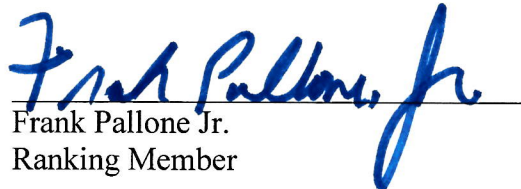
1. Have, or could, any of the Ebola emergency spending funds provided to HHS be applied toward Zika? If so, please detail what resources could be deployed. If not, why not?
2. What actions are being taken by the Public Health Emergency Medical Countermeasures Enterprise (PHEMCE) in response to preventing the spread of the Zika virus into the U.S.?
3. What kinds of rapid diagnostic tests are needed for use against Zika? Is BARDA currently funding any work in this area? If so, please detail.
4. Has ASPR developed infectious disease models on the possible of spread of Zika in the U.S.? If so, what do the models show and how does this impact ASPR's planning? If not, is ASPR relying on models from other researchers? If not, what criteria does ASPR use to assess the reliability of the model?
5. Who is the point person at ASPR to coordinate the response to the Zika virus?

If you have any questions, please contact Alan Slobodin of the majority committee staff at (202) 225-2927 or Una Lee with the minority staff at (202) 225-3641.

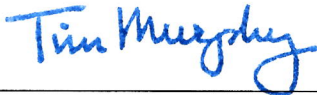
Sincerely,



Fred Upton
Chairman



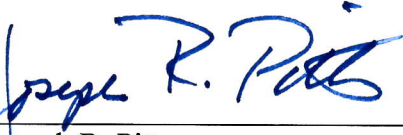
Frank Pallone Jr.
Ranking Member




Tim Murphy
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Diana DeGette
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight
and Investigations



Joseph R. Pitts
Chairman
Subcommittee on Health



Gene Green
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health

Attachment